

TARANTULA GIRL by Tom Owen

When a large wooly spider crawled across three-year-old Elizabeth Mulé's car seat, she didn't scream or cry, as many children would have done. She just wanted to learn more about the spider. Her parents didn't think it was a good idea to get their daughter a tarantula Elizabeth didn't give up, though. Instead, she began teaching her parents what she had learned about the big spiders. She explained to them that although a tarantula can bite and does have venom, its poison does not kill humans. In fact, most people don't have a bad reaction to its bite.

Since her parents were still uncertain, Elizabeth told them more. She explained that tarantulas are actually very delicate. These spiders can easily be hurt and need special care. For example, tarantulas that usually live on the ground should not be kept in a tall cage, because a fall from a high place can kill them Elizabeth also told her parents that tarantulas are helpful to humans because they eat bugs such as cockroaches.

Finally Elizabeth was able to prove to her parents that a pet tarantula would not hurt her. Once her parents were convinced, Elizabeth was allowed to have her first tarantula, which she named Spot. After her parents became used to having a large spider in the house, they let Elizabeth get a second tarantula, which she named Fluffy.

Elizabeth was very happy with her pets, but many of her friends thought they were a little scary. Some of her friends didn't even want to play at her house. Elizabeth decided that she needed to teach other people all the interesting things she knew about spiders. First Elizabeth started speaking at elementary schools. She talked about tarantulas continued to study and learn more about tarantulas.

Three years after Elizabeth received Fluffy, she was happily surprised when the spider made an egg sac. The egg sac is where baby spiders grow. The kind of tarantulas that Elizabeth owned usually did not have babies when they were kept as pets. Elizabeth watched closely as Fluffy guarded the egg sac.

One day Elizabeth noticed that Fluffy had opened the egg sac. The egg sac had gotten wet from Fluffy's water bowl, and Fluffy was eating the dead eggs. Elizabeth was afraid Fluffy might eat some eggs that were still alive, so she took the egg sac from Fluffy's cage Elizabeth and her mother carefully placed the egg sac in another cage. In a few weeks six spiders hatched from their eggs. Elizabeth put each of the tiny tarantulas into its own baby-food jar Although she wanted to keep them all, Elizabeth's parents let her keep only two of the baby tarantulas. She took them to school, and showed the students her own spiders.

Soon word got around about Elizabeth. Then she gave presentations about spiders at high schools. Soon Elizabeth, with her mother's help, wrote an article about spiders that were put on the Internet. She wanted to teach as many people as possible about tarantulas. With her mother's help, Elizabeth wrote a magazine article about hatching the tarantula eggs. When she was eight years old, Elizabeth was invited to appear on television talk shows to show people her tarantulas and share what she had learned about the big spiders. Other people also noticed Elizabeth's interest in tarantulas. In 2003 she was a guest speaker at a meeting of the American Tarantula Society

1 Which word from paragraph 3 means about the same thing as venom?

- A *bite*
- B *afraid*
- C *poison*
- D *reaction*

2 Tarantulas that usually live on the ground should not be kept in tall cages because —

- A bugs are found only on the ground
- B they don't do well in closed spaces
- C they like the warmth of the ground
- D falling from a high place can kill them

3 Paragraphs 1 and 2 are mostly about —

- A how Elizabeth became interested in spiders
- B a spider that crawled near Elizabeth
- C why Elizabeth asked questions about spiders
- D the tarantula that Elizabeth wanted

4 Before Elizabeth got a tarantula, she had to —

- A write articles about tarantulas
- B tell her friends about tarantulas
- C teach her parents about tarantulas
- D give presentations about tarantulas

5 Which words from paragraph 4 help the reader understand the meaning of delicate?

- A *still uncertain*
- B *can easily be hurt*
- C *eat bugs*
- D *live on the ground*

6 From the article, the reader can tell that tarantulas —

- A are not as dangerous as most people believe
- B can eat any kind of food

- C can kill people with their bite
- D live only in very tall trees

- 7** What is the author's purpose for writing this article?
- A To tell the reader about a girl who hatched spider eggs
 - B To give information about how tarantulas live in cages
 - C To show what to do if bitten by a tarantula
 - D To tell about a girl who became an expert on tarantulas

- 8** Elizabeth took the egg sac from Fluffy's cage because she —
- A did not want Spot to be able to hurt the eggs
 - B wanted to hatch some baby spiders to have as new pets
 - C did not want Fluffy to eat the eggs that were alive
 - D wanted to see what would happen if she took care of the egg sac

- 9** Why was Elizabeth invited to appear on television shows?
- A To tell what she had learned about her tarantulas
 - B To explain how she named her spiders
 - C To read the article she had written about spiders
 - D To describe speaking to the American Tarantula Society

- 10** In paragraph 11, the word fearless means —
- A causing fear
 - B full of fear
 - C able to fear
 - D without fear

- 11** Elizabeth's parents did not like the idea of Elizabeth having a pet tarantula because they —
- A did not want any pets in their house
 - B thought it would not be safe to have a pet tarantula
 - C did not think she was old enough to have a pet
 - D thought her friends might be afraid of the tarantula

- 12** From the article, the reader can tell that Elizabeth —
- A knows more about tarantulas than most children her age
 - B was scared when she appeared on television the first time
 - C is an excellent speaker in front of large crowds
 - D wants to write a book about tarantulas